

THE ROLE AND ASSESSMENT  
OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS  
IN  
THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

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in the department of  
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University of Tasmania  
December, 1986

This dissertation does not contain any material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree or graduate diploma in any tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the dissertation.

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## Abstract:

This dissertation reviews the function and assessment of teacher- student relationships and their bearing on the learning process in the primary school classroom.

The importance attached to teacher-student relationships in Australian schools is surveyed. The existence of positive relationships is recognized as being essential.

Role relationships between teachers and students are examined. Whilst acknowledging the necessity of these role relationships, the potential for additional relationships to develop and co-exist is explored. A variety of teaching roles is listed and discussed.

Variables which influence teacher-student relationships are identified. The bearing of these variables on effective learning is examined. Some conflicting evidence is presented and debated.

The assessment of teaching skills is reviewed with particular reference to teacher-student relationship-building skills. Current practices in teacher assessment are examined. Emphasis is placed on the need for consistency between the aspect of teaching behaviour requiring attention and the type of teacher assessment employed. Specific reference is made to assessment practices in Tasmania, and Australia as a whole. The compatibility of these practices with the approach required to assess ongoing and developmental teacher behaviours is discussed.

Teacher-student relationships play a vital part in the learning process. However, these relationships alone are not sufficient to ensure effective learning. Teacher behaviours which contribute towards the building of positive teacher-student relationships have been identified. In addition,

behaviours which students display in effective learning environments are listed. There is a high congruence between behaviours typically found in effective learning environments and behaviours which help build positive teacher-student relationships.

Strategies to promote awareness of the role of teacher-student relationships in this respect are recommended. Finally, suggestions to facilitate effective assessment of teacher-student relationship skills are made.

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# **THE ROLE AND ASSESSMENT OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM**

## **CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND RATIONALE**

### **1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this dissertation is to review and collate literature dealing with teacher-student relationships and their bearing on the teaching-learning process in the primary classroom. In addition, methods of assessing how teachers develop teacher-student relationships will be examined.

### **1.2 Rationale**

Teachers project an image of themselves in everything they do and say in their classrooms. Students respond to their teacher's behaviour. The way in which these interactions take place is one aspect which plays a role in determining teaching effectiveness. It is essential that teachers should be familiar with findings related to this aspect of teacher behaviour.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE IMPORTANCE PLACED ON TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS**

Teacher-student relationships in the classroom are the product of interactions which take place between teachers and students. These translate into the influence that teachers and students have on one another in the classroom environment

Both formal and informal interactions contribute to teacher-student relations. Formal interactions take place in the process of the teacher and students fulfilling their classroom roles. Any additional interactions apart from those entailed in the teaching and learning of the formal curriculum constitute informal interaction. Whether or not teachers are engaged in formal teaching behaviour they will be interacting with students. These interactions initiated by the teacher determine the responses of students and the relationships which can exist between the teacher and students.

In Australian educational practice it is possible to identify policies developed by departments of education which suggest that some degree of importance is placed on student satisfaction and teacher-student relationships in the schooling process.

Official Tasmanian policy is that "students' satisfaction with school is largely dependent on the warmth of student-teacher relationships in the school." (*Tasmanian Education in the Next Decade*, p.44)

The Committee on Primary Education which in 1980 compiled the report *Primary Education in Tasmania* stated:

...developments in Australia and overseas in recent years have produced many schools and teachers where teaching programs have operated most effectively



because the concept of success for each child has been consistently promoted, the classroom climate has been purposeful, welcoming and secure for every child, and fun and pleasure have been constant elements of the learning process. (p.28)

Information regarding the assessment of teachers was sought from the other departments of education and teacher unions around Australia. From the replies received, material relating specifically to the teacher-student relationships area was extracted.

In the Northern Territory there were ten behaviours which teachers undergoing assessment were expected to display. One of these concerned relationships with students. The definition of this behaviour mentioned that teachers should display relationships with students in the education process, counselling and recreational functions. (Northern Territory Teaching Service 1984: 27-29)

Victorian authorities specified relationships with parents, students and peers as areas that must be considered. The relationships area was one of ten aspects of the teaching task. The reply stated:

Teachers can be expected to develop an empathy with students, their parents and fellow staff members whilst maintaining professional objectivity and integrity in their conduct. Tact, judgement and compassion should be evidenced in the teachers' handling of situations and they should be made aware of the constraints within which they operate and of their responsibilities towards children in their care. (Victorian Education Department, 1977:12)

The Beazley report of 1984 was a major review of educational issues in Western Australia.

**The Beazley committee recognized:**

**...schooling- from the curriculum, to teaching, to the physical environment and to organizational arrangements - must be directed towards ensuring the highest possible levels of care and self-esteem for all who work in schools, and in particular, for students. (p.149)**

**The Beazley committee highlighted five areas to be considered when developing duty statements for teachers:**

- (1) classroom environment;**
- (2) planning;**
- (3) teaching skills;**
- (4) working relationships; and**
- (5) parent and community links.**

**The first of these, relating to classroom environment stated that "the teacher establishes a humane, caring classroom environment in which the dignity of each individual is respected." (pp.217-218)**

**In the Australian Capital Territory the area of teachers' professional relationships with students was rated equally with:**

- (1) professional competence;**
- (2) teaching ability;**
- (3) professional relationships with staff;**
- (4) professional relationships with parents and the community;**
- (5) specialist contributions in education;**
- (6) organisation and administration; and**
- (7) leadership skills. (ACT Schools Authority:1984)**

**In New South Wales five components of the teacher's work were mentioned. One of these was labelled "interpersonal relationships" and specified relationships with students.**

**The others were:**

- (1) teaching ability;**
- (2) organisational and administrative ability;**
- (3) professional awareness and development; and**
- (4) personal qualities. (N.S.W.:1982)**

**There is no doubt that all states and territories from which information was available believed that:**

- (1) teacher-student relationships are an important aspect of the teaching process; and**
- (2) these relationships must somehow be assessed.**

### **CHAPTER 3: TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CLASSROOM**

Jackson (1978:11) observed that at the beginning of the school year a role relationship exists between teachers and their students. There are widely held expectations that a teacher will create and maintain a classroom environment in which students can learn new skills, attitudes and knowledge. Students expect their teacher to help them learn. Likewise the teacher expects to initiate learning experiences and to assist students with their learning.

Relationships other than role relationships take time to develop. They evolve as the result of the two-way communication between the people involved, in this case the teacher and students.

McNeil and Popham (1973:219) defined a teacher as someone "engaged in interactive behaviour with one or more students for the purpose of effecting a change in those students." The use of the word 'interactive' has particular significance when the specific focus, teacher-student relationships, is considered. As the school year progresses, teacher and students interact in the process of learning. The quality and quantity of the interaction will vary greatly depending on the teacher and students involved.

The teacher's role is one of group leader while the students' roles are those of group members. The teacher is in the position of being able to dictate the relationships which will exist in the classroom. It is the teacher who has been assigned the responsibility to identify what is desirable or necessary for students to learn and then to manage the environment so that it will be conducive to this learning taking place.

Interactions may be strictly to do with the learning tasks being carried out by students and limited to the classroom roles being performed by the teacher and students, but may be of other types. The pattern of interactions will determine the types of relationships which can develop between teacher and student.

As the year progresses the relationship grows and develops. Jackson (1978:11) explained:

This relationship is always reciprocal but it may be positive reciprocation or negative. Whatever kind of relationship emerges, one thing appears certain, namely, that this relationship will determine the cooperation, interest, motivation and zest for learning on the part of children and indeed the happiness and mental health of the teacher.

Jackson defined a positive relationship as one where "the teacher views the children as persons having rights of their own and a right to be treated and valued accordingly." (p.11)

It is useful to examine the variety of teaching roles which can be adopted. How teachers view their role will partly determine the types of relationships with students that can be developed.

There are various stages of teaching role in which teachers operate depending on their approach to students, learning tasks, the school and the wider community. Fielding (1983:7) proposed a six stage model of teacher development. These six stages are presented on the following page in table 1.

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Earlier Role</i>	<i>New or Elaborated Role</i>
1	Secondary school student	Tertiary student
2	Tertiary student	Novice teacher
3	Novice teacher	Novice professional
4	Novice professional	Client-centred professional
5	Client-centred professional	Curriculum-centred professional
6	Curriculum-centred professional	Educational theorist

Table 1: Fielding's six stages of teacher development (1983:7)

This is not an exhaustive or necessarily sequential list according to Fielding. Teachers can use the above model to:

- (1) select a role;
- (2) vary roles to suit their individual needs;
- (3) make progress according to their individual interests and ability; and
- (4) build up at any one time mutually supporting roles from two or more of the stages.

The ways in which a teacher relates to students depends on how that teacher perceives the students. Consider the difference between the stage of "Novice professional" and "Client-centred professional"; from where the teacher is the centre of attention of the classroom in which students are seen as a class, to the situation where the teacher sees students, parents and colleagues as the points of reference, while self-centred needs that have to be satisfied still remain.

During teacher training and the first few years of teaching, many teachers find themselves unable to adopt roles other than that of "Tertiary student" and "Novice professional". They find themselves, being new to an extremely demanding job,

in a situation where the need for survival can surmount all other professional concerns. They are not skilled enough to channel any energy into aspects of the teaching process other than being concerned with presenting lesson content.

Connell (1985:127) maintained that teachers must establish emotional relationships with both individual students and whole classes. Only when these relationships are cemented can teachers teach effectively. He pointed out that "getting the kids to learn often means an identification with them, a willingness to care about them and commonly to like them."

Teachers have an obligation to have high quality dealings with a large number of students and of necessity they must come to know and understand their students both as individuals and as members of a group.

The development of a variety of teacher-student relationships is unavoidable. These relationships are important contributors to the outcomes of student learning. Therefore it is essential that effective relationship building skills are employed by teachers.

## **CHAPTER 4: VARIABLES WHICH AFFECT TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS**

### **4.1 Teachers' attitudes towards students**

Teachers' attitudes towards students play an important role in how teachers relate to students. To provide an overall picture of the different aspects of teaching which teachers' attitudes influence, it is useful to refer to Chavez (1984:246) who listed Wehlings and Charter's eight dimensions of teachers' attitudes. These are:

- (1) subject-matter emphasis;
- (2) personal adjustment;
- (3) ideology;
- (4) student autonomy versus teacher direction;
- (5) emotional disengagement;
- (6) consideration of student viewpoint;
- (7) classroom management; and
- (8) student challenge and integrative learning.

These eight dimensions relate closely to Fielding's six stages of teacher development listed on page 8. The stage of development will determine, in part at least, a teacher's attitude towards students. This in turn will have some bearing on how the teacher operates with students in the classroom.

Teachers' attitudes towards students and learning have a sizeable influence on students and their learning. Students will interpret teachers' attitudes differently depending on their own personality and preferred learning style.

Khan and Weiss (1973:775) noted that teachers' attitudes towards their students were reflected in teachers' classroom behaviour as perceived by students or observed by experts. In support of this claim they referred to Silberman's 1969 elementary school study where a significant relationship was



obtained between students' predictions about teachers' attitudes towards them and the actual behaviour of teachers.

Teachers' attitudes towards their role in relation to the students in their classes are at the foundation of teacher behaviour in the classroom. This line of thought was explored by Paisey (1975:15) who stated his belief:

At the base of the teacher's behavioural strategy lie assumptions about human nature and human behaviour of one kind or another which pervade every decision and action taken.

The attitudes that teachers hold as people towards people in general should form the basis of their behaviour towards students.

Downie, Loudfoot and Telfer (1974) specifically focused on the role-relationship of teacher and student and the co-existence of this relationship with a broader human concern. Downie, Loudfoot and Telfer stated that a teacher's attitude towards students should recognize each student's human qualities. (p.171) Students cannot be regarded purely as learners who will be ready to learn whatever teachers decide should be taught. Each student brings personal qualities to learning experiences; these qualities may or may not facilitate the learning process. Respect for persons is an essential component of the way in which a teacher must relate to students.

Friendships are vital in any human environment; the classroom is no exception. Downie, Loudfoot and Telfer addressed the issue of teacher-student friendships by commenting:

Whereas friendship cannot replace the role-relationship or form part of it, it can logically exist alongside it; and that, though such friendships

obviously have their dangers, they can also be valuable.  
(p.171)

Jenkins and Bausell (1974:572-573) collated 264 surveys in their investigation of how teachers viewed the effective teacher. The teachers and administrators were questioned to determine the importance they placed on sixteen criteria concerned with evaluating effective teaching behaviour. Top of the list, as seen by the respondents, was: (1) the relationship a teacher has with the class. The next eleven criteria in order were:

- (2) willingness to be flexible, to be direct or indirect as the situation demands;
- (3) effectiveness in controlling the class;
- (4) capacity to perceive the world from the student's point of view;
- (5) personal adjustment and character;
- (6) influence on the student's behaviour;
- (7) knowledge of subject matter and related areas;
- (8) ability to personalize teaching;
- (9) extent to which the teacher's verbal behaviour in the classroom is student-centred;
- (10) extent to which teacher uses discovery methods;
- (11) the amount students learn; and
- (12) general knowledge and understanding of educational facts.

At the basis of many of these twelve criteria are the concepts of: relationships; flexibility in the teaching approach adopted; the ability to understand students; and the selection and performance of behaviour based on that understanding in order to influence positively student's behaviour.

It is vital that a balance be struck between the development of teacher-student friendships and the

establishment of teacher- student roles that are necessary for the maintenance of an effective classroom learning environment in which students have the freedom to learn effectively. Classroom environment will be examined in more detail in the following section.

#### **4.2 Human environment: Classroom environment**

Three domains of human environment were identified by Moos (1979:195):

1. Relationship domain;
2. Goal orientation domain; and
3. Systems maintenance and change domain.

The relationship domain incorporates human factors; the goal orientation domain embodies learning tasks and learning outcomes; and the systems maintenance and change domain is the combination of factors such as structure of teaching experiences and clarity of teaching presentation.

Moos reached four major conclusions which relate to classroom environment:

- (1) orientation towards relationship-building and innovation in classes can create student satisfaction and interest in the subject matter. Social growth (friendliness and helpfulness) and personal growth (independence, self-esteem and creativity) show an improvement. However there is less facilitation of traditional achievement scores in these classes;
- (2) classes that emphasize goal (task and competition) and maintenance (organization and clarity) areas and that are lower in warmth tend to produce higher achievement gains, but these classes do less well in facilitating student interest, morale or creativity;

- (3) control oriented classes lead to dissatisfaction and alienation and do not facilitate personal, social or academic growth; and finally
- (4) a balance is best. Specifically it was found that gains on traditional achievement measures are most likely to occur when there is a combination of warmth and supportive relationships, an emphasis on specific academic tasks and accomplishments, and when learning experiences are reasonably clear, orderly and well-structured. The presence of high expectations and demands for performance, creativity and personal growth will result in gains on traditional achievement measures while also developing creativity and personal growth in students.

Table 2, which follows, summarises Moos' findings:

<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Domains of classroom environment</i>			
	Relationship	Goal	Systems	Combined
social personal- development	+	-	-	+
traditional achievement scores	-	+	-	+

Table 2: Domains of classroom environment

(The + sign indicates facilitation of outcomes of either type. The - sign denotes less than desirable outcomes.)

Moos' work has been substantiated by more recent studies. Fisher, Docker and Fraser (1986:3-5) referred to several studies carried out this decade which have shown Moos' conclusions to be a valid description of environment.

Attention to both task orientation and a warm classroom climate is highlighted by Chavez (1984) who referred to Buswell's work of 1953 which although over thirty years old is important to consider because of its focus on social relationships in the classroom. Buswell's primary conclusion was:

that when we consider a classroom of boys and girls in either the lower or upper grades, it may be said that in general those who are succeeding in their school work will also be succeeding in their social relationships with their peers. (Chavez, 1984:242)

Another writer who presented a similar point of view is Coatney (1983) who specifically studied classroom environment regarding the teaching of reading and mathematics at the primary level. Coatney found:

in classes where students took responsibility for their classwork and belongings and where students helped each other and shared materials, achievement was generally higher. (p.28)

Coatney referred to Berliner and Tikunoff's 1976 work which found that classroom environments characterised as warm, democratic and enjoyable were significantly related to student academic outcomes. (p.28)

The effect that teachers' relationship building behaviour has on similar behaviour being adopted by students is a pertinent issue. Modelling of roles by teachers is an essential source of learning for students. The ability to develop relationships with others is a behaviour which can be modelled

by teachers.

Work has been directed towards investigating the relationships between learning environments and student outcomes.

Fraser (1976:113) examined variables affecting learning outcomes. Specifically he considered three variables proposed by Walberg in a classroom learning outcomes model:

- (1) classroom environment;
- (2) instructional; and
- (3) student aptitude.

In this model, learning outcomes are a function of instructional and environmental variables. Fraser presented findings which strongly suggested that classroom environment variables contribute more to differing learning outcomes over and above that which can be accounted for by instructional and aptitude variables alone. (p.113) Classroom environment variables need careful consideration according to Walberg. (1982:121) Walberg (1969:474) and Fraser (1976:113) specified class size as one of these variables. Anderson and Walberg (1979:89) found that smaller classes promoted student behaviour and performance.

In addition to class size, Fisher and Fraser (1981:147) pointed out that Walberg identified differences in teacher personality as another factor which is connected with variations in the learning environment.

Fraser and Fisher (1983a:1-2) explained the rationale for using perceptions of psychosocial characteristics of classroom learning environments to assist in making teaching decisions.

#### **4.3 Student's perceptions of teacher behaviour and classroom environment**

The images teachers believe they project are not

necessarily those that the students perceive. The differences between teachers' perceptions of their own behaviour and the perceptions of students have been explored by learning environment studies.

Several writers have examined the area of students' perceptions of teachers and the classroom environment.

Chavez (1984:246) referred to Moos and Moos' observation that "the predictability of students' cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes is related to students' perceptions of psychosocial characteristics in classrooms."

Classroom events and outcomes are planned according to the teacher's perceptions of needs, wants and behaviours exhibited by the students. Students' behaviour is influenced in part by how they perceive the teacher. These perceptions may be either conscious or subconscious. Stayrook, Corno and Winne (1978:51-56) found that such perceptions influence student achievement.

Fox, Luszki and Schmuck (1966:9) stated:

The way a pupil feels about his peers, about his studies, and about his teacher is one of the major factors determining how much he will benefit from his classroom experience.

Fordham (1983:21) pointed out that student interest in subject matter, academic motivation and expectation of success, seemed likely to influence the student's willingness to participate in the learning activity.

The way in which teachers behave makes a major contribution to the classroom atmosphere and students' perceptions of the classroom environment. This will, in part, determine how the students will behave and learn in their classroom.

One of the instruments which has been developed as a

result of research into classroom environment is the Learning Environment Inventory (LEI). Fraser and Fisher (1983a:9-13) summarised its development and use. The LEI measures fifteen climate dimensions. Rentoul and Fraser (1979:235) drew attention to two patterns of consistent findings resulting from use of the LEI:

- (1) these findings show that in classrooms where the methods of instruction vary there can be a difference in the students' perceptions of the learning environment; and
- (2) students' perceptions of the learning environment are good predictors of their intellectual and affective learning outcomes even taking into account student characteristics at the outset.

The My Class Inventory (MCI) is a simplified version of the LEI. As a result the MCI is suited to use with children in the eight to twelve years age group. This makes it relevant to the primary classroom setting. Fraser and Fisher (1983a:13) explained the design of the MCI which contains five of the LEI's original scales:

- (1) cohesiveness;
- (2) friction;
- (3) satisfaction;
- (4) difficulty; and
- (5) competitiveness.

The survey takes about fifteen minutes to administer. The MCI would be useful to employ in the assessment of teacher-student relationships in primary classrooms because it measures aspects of the classroom environment such as cohesiveness and satisfaction.

Fraser and Fisher (1982 and 1983b) corroborated the strong association between student learning outcomes and their



perceptions of classroom environment that had been measured by the MCI. These associations between student learning outcomes and their perception of classroom environment were statistically significant. (1982:138) Student achievement was found to be greater in classrooms where there was similarity between the actual environment and that which was preferred by students. (1983b:98)

The Individualized Classroom Environment Questionnaire (ICEQ) is capable of measuring four aspects of classroom learning environment:

- (1) students' perceptions of the actual learning environment;
- (2) students' perceptions of preferred classroom learning environment;
- (3) teachers' perceptions of actual classroom learning environment; and
- (4) teachers' perceptions of preferred classroom learning environment.

Rentoul and Fraser (1979:242) identified some possible applications of measurements resulting from use of the ICEQ:

- (1) investigation of the difference in teacher and student perceptions of a learning environment;
- (2) determination of teacher preference for certain types of learning environments;
- (3) the effects of discrepancies in students' perceptions of preferred and actual classroom learning environments; and
- (4) the causes and effects of discrepancies of teachers' perceptions of preferred and actual classroom learning environments.

Attempts to match teachers, students and learning environments should be pursued. If teachers and students who

have preferences for similar learning environments are grouped together as much as possible, learning experiences provided by the teacher will be more effective.

The interdependency of the different aspects of classroom environment should not be underestimated. Successful attempts to change specified dimensions of classroom learning environments result in changes in other dimensions. This was a point made by Fraser and Deer. (1983:45) For instance, changes in classroom climate can result in a variation in the degree of emphasis placed by the teachers and students on task performance.

By involving students through giving information to assist in decision making as outlined above, teachers are more likely to achieve an optimum learning environment.

In addition to the research findings which support the link between classroom climate and student outcomes other effects that result from altering classroom environment have been identified.

Rentoul and Fraser (1979:234) investigated the influence that environment has on such psychological variables as self-esteem, personal growth and the development of reasoning abilities. Self-esteem and personal growth were linked with human relationships outcomes.

The importance that Anderson and Walberg (1979:95) placed on classroom environment was such that they stated their belief that a desirable classroom climate would be a primary process goal of a school rather than a means to increase measurable learning outcomes.

Although classroom climates should vary depending on the perception and realities for the people involved, it is possible to list some factors which should be a part of any classroom.

Insel and Moos (1974:187) referred to Mumford's view of

an ideal classroom climate as one which sought "continuity, variety, orderly and purposeful growth" as opposed to one which "magnifies authoritarian power and minimises or destroys human initiative, self-direction or self-government." This view is in accordance with the concept of an environment which facilitates positive teacher-student relationships and student growth in learning.

Chavez (1984:246) provided further support for this view of an ideal classroom climate. In his examination of classrooms, Chavez looked at the work of Moos and Moos who found that encouragement of a feeling of belonging and teacher support were positively related to student achievement and that competition and teacher control were negatively related to class academic achievement.

The issue of who should make the critical decisions regarding changes to a classroom environment was raised by Insel and Moos (1974:187) who argued in favour of critical decisions regarding changes to a classroom environment being best carried out by the people who function within that environment. There was, according to Insel and Moos, a definite tendency for the involvement of outsiders to result in resistance which may manifest itself in subtle and disguised forms. The learning environment questionnaires are materials which facilitate the essential involvement of teachers and students in decision making about the environment.

#### **4.4 The correlation between style of teaching and student-teacher relationships**

Style of teaching refers to the overall teaching pattern or approach adopted by the teacher.

The question of whether a specific teaching style is associated with the development of effective relationships with

students has been addressed by a number of researchers.

Khan and Weiss (1973:778) cited evidence that student-centred classes assisted in developing more positive attitudes in students towards themselves as members of the group than did teacher-centred classes.

Acheson and Goll (1980:27-28) referred to four behaviours which Flanders and his associates identified as being contributors to effective teaching. These findings suggested that emphasis should be placed on an indirect style of teaching. This style is associated with the teacher behaviours of questioning, accepting students' feelings, acknowledging students' ideas, and praising and encouraging students. Use of these behaviours, Flanders and his associates claimed, resulted in the students both learning more and having better attitudes towards learning. The latter, particularly for primary students who are in their formative schooling years, is pertinent to the primary classroom context.

Centra and Potter (1980:281-282) referred to Rosenshine and Furst's examination of around sixty studies of teacher behaviour. Factors which consistently seemed to be associated with student growth revolved around the teacher's use of an indirect teaching approach. Harris (1975:29) defined indirectness:

the use of students' ideas, the tendency to question rather than to tell, the use of questions that require higher levels of thinking, and flexibility to vary affective and cognitive behaviours.

Not all the research findings are in agreement with the general notion that indirect styles of teaching are effective. For instance there is Medley's (1979:21) finding that the most effective teachers were those who tended to employ lower level

questions in preference to high level ones, whose students asked fewer questions and received less feedback and who tended not to enlarge upon or discuss what students said.

Another piece of research which supports this point of view was presented by Greenblatt, Cooper and Muth (1984:58). These writers stated that effective teaching behaviours tend to reflect task orientation and direct instruction.

A balanced approach appears to be the answer. After completing a major study of primary classrooms Galton, Simon and Crall (1980) concluded that no one teaching style is more effective than any other. In their study four styles of teaching were identified:

- (1) "individual monitors" who used a low level of questioning and a high level of non-verbal interaction, mainly in the marking of children's work individually;
- (2) "class enquirers" who emphasized questioning mainly to do with task work as well as a high level of statements;
- (3) "group instructors" who used a high level of factual statements in preference to the presentation of ideas along with a high level of verbal feedback and demonstration by showing or gesture; and
- (4) "style changers" who changed: (a) infrequently as a response to desirable or undesirable student behaviour; (b) as a response to the curriculum area being studied; or (c) regularly according to no plan and apparently as a response to undesirable student behaviour. (pp. 122-126)

Galton, Simon and Crall closely examined the effectiveness of each of the four styles of teaching with each of the four student behaviour types they identified in the

classrooms.

The student behaviour types identified were:

- (1) "attention seekers" who, as a priority, attempted to initiate contact with the teacher;
  - (2) "intermittent workers" who had a low level of interaction with teachers but a high level with other students in between completing tasks;
  - (3) "solitary workers" who worked on tasks in preference to having interaction with either the teacher or other students; and
  - (4) "quiet collaborators" who interacted as a group with the teacher in preference to seeking individual interaction with either the teacher or other students (interaction was mainly regarding tasks).
- (pp.143-147)

The overall finding of Galton, Simon and Crall's research which is noteworthy is that each style of teaching was found to have both its strengths and weaknesses. It was not possible to isolate one set of teaching behaviours as the most appropriate in every classroom situation. (p.153)

A well-balanced view derived from an analysis of teaching styles was expressed by Peterson (Hawthorne, 1981:260) who concluded:

...we have seen that, although a more direct or traditional teaching approach may be slightly better, on the average, than an open approach for increasing students' achievement, an open approach appears to be better than a more direct approach for increasing students' creativity, independence, curiosity and favourable attitudes towards school and learning...the research suggests that some kinds of students may do better in an open approach and others may do better in a more direct approach.

While in the process of teacher education, students are encouraged to consider the virtues of child-centred learning and individual instruction, it is rarely student-centred itself. Symes (1983:38) made this observation. An interesting hypothesis to consider is whether by providing a more student-centred education more graduating teachers might be encouraged to consider the appropriateness of such an approach to teaching in their classrooms.

#### **4.5 Specific teaching behaviours**

In addition to findings about broad teaching approaches described above research has been directed at specific teaching behaviours and their effects on student outcomes. These findings will be considered next.

#### **4.6 Development of student attitudes towards themselves and their work**

Researchers have isolated many specific teacher behaviours which they believe make a contribution to effective learning.

The fact that students' social skills have a bearing on their use of their academic skills has been recognised for many years. Teachers have a vital role to play in fostering students' attitudes.

As long as twenty years ago Fox, Luszki and Schmuck (1966:9) advanced the idea that a student's attitude to the various aspects of school (peers, learning and teachers) plays a major role in determining how much that student benefits from classroom experience. Fox, Luszki and Schmuck stated:

A classroom learning atmosphere that provides emotional support, encouragement, and mutual respect is conducive to high self-esteem and to the utilization

of academic abilities. Without supportive classroom relationships pupils often lack interest in learning, and the dual educational goals of academic learning and mental health are difficult to achieve. (p.89)

Fox, Luszki and Schmuck listed three factors which they saw as being conducive to learning:

- (1) clear and concrete presentation of methods and objectives;
- (2) frequent checks by the teacher of students' reactions to learning activities; and
- (3) consideration by the teacher of students' points of view. (p.89) They found that students who feel comfortable with their classmates are more likely to utilize fully their academic abilities than when they are not at ease with their peers. (p.23) They referred to Bledsoe and Garrison's view that self-concept is one of the most essential areas of human growth. (p.89)

Self-concept was one of four affective factors Combs (1982:495-496) identified as having significant influence on the learning process. The other three factors he pointed to were:

- (1) feeling of challenge or threat,
- (2) being valued; and
- (3) feeling of belonging or being cared for.

Students are likely to be more ready to learn when they feel positive about themselves and their classroom environment. Proponents of affective education, such as Combs, believe that through the development of certain types of relationships with students, teachers can facilitate the learning process. Students' emotional needs must be taken into account as a part of this alongside cognitive considerations.



**Combs stated:**

**Self-concepts tend to corroborate themselves. Students who believe they can, are more likely to try and thus are more likely to succeed. Their success and teacher feedback positively enhance students' self-concepts. Students who believe they cannot avoid the embarrassment and humiliation of involvement are likely to experience failure - which only proves what they thought in the first place. What we know about self-concept and its effect on learning processes has been demonstrated beyond question. Schools that ignore affective determiners of student behaviour do so at the risk of diminishing their effectiveness. (p.496)**

**This point of view ties in with the concept of providing positive and successful experiences for students in order to encourage their further attempts at tasks. If children continually experience negative feelings they will be less keen to take the risks involved in undertaking new learning tasks.**

**Blount (1973:1075) referred to a study concerned with self-esteem and student participation completed by Hacket, Brown and Michael who worked with students in grades 4 and 5. Two groups of students were organised:**

- (1) an experimental group exposed to a method involving a minimal threat to self-esteem, student participation in the development of cognitive understandings and divergent thinking; and**
- (2) the second, a control group of students taught by a method involving acquisition of factual information using routine questions with potential threat-inducing properties and convergent thinking.**

**Both groups were assessed by means of completing an essay and objective examination. The experimental group performed significantly better than the control group.**

**Ellet, Capie and Johnson (1980:219-220) surveyed nearly**

six thousand educators to determine what they saw as minimum skills for teaching efficiency. In the process of carrying out this study three major areas were identified:

- (1) teaching plans and material;
- (2) classroom procedures; and
- (3) interpersonal skills.

In the area of interpersonal skills the development of positive self-concepts was one of three skills identified.

Bennett (1976:140) in his analysis of students' self-concept and self-esteem found that the degree of classroom formality did not significantly affect the level of self-concept and self-esteem. However, he suggested that because of more opportunity for student movement and interaction more complex and focused social structures could develop in informal classrooms.

Fox, Luszki and Schmuck (1966:90) listed four reasons why teachers should be concerned with students' self-concepts. These were:

- (1) self-concept is a good indicator of the condition of mental health;
- (2) the way a person feels about himself or herself is an important determinant of his or her behaviour towards others;
- (3) a low self-esteem in a particular area is likely to lead to consideration of self as a failure in that area; and
- (4) self-concept is accessible to normal change and planned alteration.

The development of a healthy concept of the self is vital. Fox, Luszki and Schmuck (p.101) concluded that to facilitate this the teacher should place paramount importance on the creation of an appropriate climate within the classroom.

#### **4.7 Provision of a warm emotional climate**

Several writers have looked at the teacher's warmth, caring, helpfulness and understanding and the effect these have on learning.

Carew and Lightfoot (1979:87) listed what they considered to be specific teacher behaviours that indicate the quality of teacher-student relationships:

- (1) the use of an "open" versus a direct mode of questioning children;
- (2) the asking of questions encouraging "free" responses;
- (3) positive versus negative responses to children's requests; and
- (4) the teacher's participation in casual conversation, play, or humour with children.

Carew and Lightfoot found that the use of open questioning, positive evaluation, positive reinforcement and lessened negative reinforcement was displayed by teachers whose children were observed to behave in appropriate and expressive ways and less often in dependent and inappropriate ways. These teachers also were found to have shown more interest in socio-emotional considerations and more flexibility in their arrangement of groups and seating patterns. (pp. 87 and 102)

Hawthorne (1981:259) concluded from a large number of studies reviewed by Rosenshine that effective teachers were generally warm towards students and supportive of their judgements.

Acheson (1980:27) listed three observation criteria of effective teaching from the work of Ryans and his colleagues. One of these indicated that the warmer and more understanding teachers were, as opposed to being cold and aloof, the more effective they could be in their teaching.

Doyle (1983:29) referred to Uronowitz and Doyle's work which demonstrated that "students learn better in the presence of liked teachers than in either neutral or disliked learning situations."

Gorton (1983:247) looked not only at teacher behaviour as a variable of effective teaching but also at the attitude of the teachers towards their students and to their teaching role. Gorton cited a study by Sabine which found that most students wanted to be taught by a caring teacher who challenged them and made them work. Students thought that it was important that teachers possessed both characteristics. (p.248)

Warmth and indirectness were two major factors of teacher behaviour identified by Gage (Harris et al:1979:290). Other studies to which Harris et al referred suggested that understanding, kindness and friendliness were effective teaching behaviours.

Fox, Luszki and Schmuck (1966:9) explained that for students to exhibit a high level of self-esteem and make good use of their academic abilities their classroom environment has to provide emotional support and encouragement. In addition it has to facilitate respect for other people. Their conclusion was that:

experience and research show that students tend to respond favourably to the learning situation when the teacher presents methods and objectives to them clearly and concretely, when frequent checks are made of their reactions to classroom activities, and when the teacher takes their points of view into consideration.

Frequently checking student reactions and considering student points of view are the behaviours of a teacher who is concerned with the individual qualities of each student. These

sorts of behaviours are ones that can be associated with the human qualities of the teaching-learning process.

Berliner and Tikunoff (1976:29) found the following dimensions of classroom behaviour denoted in part the behaviour of more effective teachers. In mathematics and reading in grades two and five it was found that more effective teachers were:

- (1) accepting of students' feelings and attitudes;
- (2) actively listening to what a student is saying, reading or reciting;
- (3) reinforcing good behaviour;
- (4) democratic;
- (5) encouraging;
- (6) dividing time and attention equally among all students;
- (7) calling on students by name;
- (8) polite;
- (9) promoting self-sufficiency of students; and
- (10) showing warmth and affection towards students.

The student behaviours they observed in the classrooms of the effective teachers included co-operation and being allowed to work at places other than their assigned seat. In general they found that effective teachers' classrooms were marked by a warm, friendly-like quality in classroom interaction, with good feelings apparent both between the teacher and students and the students with each other. (p.29)

Psychological support from teachers has been linked with effective classroom environments by several writers. Medley (1979:22) concluded from his review of process-product studies that the learning environment found in effective teachers' classrooms tended to be orderly as well as psychologically supportive and could be maintained with

relative ease by the teacher. The disorder of the ineffective teacher's classroom prevented the teacher from being able to offer the same degree of psychological support.

An investigation of the need to consider the different levels of school separately when looking for criteria that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching was carried out by Tuckman, Steber and Hyman (1979) who studied the perceptions of principals regarding the effectiveness of teaching styles using the Tuckman Teacher Feedback Form (TTFF). The results showed that elementary, intermediate and high school principals had differing perceptions of effective teaching behaviours. More specifically, with regard to teacher behaviour relevant to teacher-student relationships in the primary classroom, Tuckman, Steber and Hyman found that elementary principals saw warmth and acceptance as two important dimensions of teaching style contributing to teacher effectiveness. In contrast, high school principals saw their effective teachers as being less warm and accepting. (p.112)

Not only do these findings highlight the importance of the teacher's display of warmth and acceptance in the primary classroom but they also support the view that different teaching strategies have varying levels of appropriateness depending on the age range of students.

Welch's (1979) findings relating to matching teaching approach with the age range of students supported those of Tuckman, Steber and Hyman. As a result of his study of hundreds of classes Welch provided support for the view that a more student-centred and activity-centred environment was more suited to junior high school students than senior high school students. (p.175)

#### **4.8 Encouraging students' positive feelings towards school**

Moos (1979) recognised the importance of children having positive feelings towards school. Moos referred to Epstein and McPartland's observation that:

positive reactions to school increase the likelihood that students will stay in school, develop a lasting commitment to learning and use the institution to advantage. (p.185)

This statement is vital to the teaching of primary school students who are in the formative years of their education. Furthermore Moos noted Epstein and McPartland's conclusion that:

higher satisfaction with school, greater commitment and more positive student-teacher relationships mean more enjoyable and stimulating hours spent in the compulsory school setting. (p.185)

A universal approach to teaching is not possible or desirable. Travers (1981:21) acknowledged this when he observed:

...merely providing pleasant conditions for living in the classroom is not teaching and yet it may be an essential condition for developing a well-balanced philosophy of life. Regardless of any influence that the pleasantries of life in the classroom may have on learning it is surely necessary if children are to want to continue education after they pass beyond the age of compulsory education.

Developing a positive attitude towards long term or even life-long education is part of the primary teacher's role.

#### **4.9 Use of students' ideas**

The use of students' ideas by teachers has been identified as a variable affecting educational outcomes.

Previous learning related to new material plays a major role in a student's ability to understand the new material. Fordham (1983:22) pointed out that in addition to this, a student's interest in the subject matter is another factor which is likely to influence his or her understanding of the new learning task to be undertaken. Use of students' ideas fosters students' interest in work tasks.

Bolton (1973:107) referred to the work of Flanders and Simon which found that if the teacher made statements that used ideas and opinions previously expressed by students then desirable student outcomes were facilitated.

Another instance of this variable being identified is Centra and Potter's (1980:281-282) reference to Rosenshine and Furst's sixty studies of teaching behaviour and student achievement. Use of student ideas was one of the eleven variables related to student growth that appeared consistently.

#### **4.10 Approach to students of different socio-economic status (S.E.S.)**

Students whose families live on low and unstable incomes face special problems both at home and at school. More children of low S.E.S. than those of high S.E.S. come from homes where the parents are less stable in their relationships with each other and their children. Their higher levels of unemployment and resultant lower incomes contribute negatively towards emotional security so teachers perceive the need to give more attention to basic needs which people of higher S.E.S. take for granted. For instance, the questions of where the next meal will come from, physical comfort and even physical safety can



preoccupy parents' thinking to such a degree that they unintentionally fail to address children's other needs. It is for reasons such as these that teachers of some low S.E.S. students may be the only stable and predictable adults in their students' lives. Hollingworth (1984:4) explained:

All people experience periods of depression, anxiety, personal insecurity, low self-esteem and interpersonal conflict. When people have to live on chronically low and unstable incomes, where their housing is cramped, inadequate and insecure, where their work prospects are both unpleasant and uncertain and where they are plagued with indifferent health, such emotional feelings become endemic. These in turn lead on to an increased likelihood of domestic violence and child violence. Here one would want to stress that the causes lie more in the social environment and those forces impacting on them rather than individual fault.

This type of observation is associated with recommendations such as those of Graham and Heimerer (1981:19) who recommended that a warm classroom environment may be more crucial for students of low S.E.S. than it is for students of high S.E.S.. Considerable research has been focused on suitable classroom environment and teaching approach.

Fordham (1983:20) found that teachers of high S.E.S. students were more likely to adopt a business-like approach, whereas teachers of low S.E.S. students interacted more personally with their students. S.E.S. was found to be related to students' abilities and attitudes, and was likely to affect the manner in which teachers and students interacted.

Brophy (1976:33) found that the most effective teachers of students of low S.E.S. were:

...patient and encouraging, willing to develop personal relationships with students, willing to reteach and use

substitute materials and methods until something worked, and less satisfied with traditional materials (particularly standardised tests), because they felt that these did not meet their students' needs.

The identification of patience, encouragement and personal relationships indicates the importance of teacher-student relationship skills.

Specific behaviours have been identified as essential for use with students of low S.E.S.. There is evidence that it is undesirable to employ these behaviours with other students. For instance, one of Medley's (1977:14) conclusions was that most of the behaviours found to be effective with students of high S.E.S. were found to be ineffective with students of low S.E.S. and vice versa. Links were established between students' attitudes, self-concept and achievement. No such connections were substantiated between the achievements of students of low S.E.S. and high S.E.S. students taught by similar methods. Medley found that attitude towards school correlated with achievement gains at a level of .72; gains in self-concept correlated with arithmetic gain at a level of .73; but gains in students of high S.E.S. correlated with those of low S.E.S. at a level of only .38.

Furthermore Soar and Soar (1979) expressed no support for the idea that for learning to occur a teacher had to provide a warm emotional climate in the classroom. They stated that "what is crucial is that the climate not be negative." (p.105) This, they noted, was particularly the case with classes of students of low S.E.S.. Some support for their position can be found in the work of Peng and Ashburn (1979) who found that if teachers always behaved positively towards students there was a risk that young children in particular might confuse this behaviour with permissiveness. Peng and Ashburn investigated

the use of warm and friendly behaviour particularly with students of low S.E.S. who might not be highly motivated to learn. In fact they found a positive relationship between negative teacher affect and student achievement in their work with students of low S.E.S. at grade six level. Their work raised the question of whether certain students benefit from some negative teacher behaviours. These behaviours, it was claimed, might create pressure and anxiety which would assist some students to learn more effectively. Peng and Ashburn concluded that "perhaps an effective teacher is the one to whom students pay close attention, for whatever reason." (p.79)

These points of view provide a contrast to the work and findings relating to socio-economic status presented in much of the available research material. Adopting any behaviour to gain the students' attention, regardless of the other effects it may have on classroom environment, might imply doing away with the long term benefits that a more positive approach to teacher-student relationships has on student attitudes to formal education. Peng and Ashburn appear to have been concerned exclusively with task orientation. Adopting this position fails to take a balanced point of view. Much of the research previously referred to places emphasis partly on task but not at the expense of all other outcomes.

#### **4.11 Sex discrimination**

Spender (1982:55) found that boys and girls perceived that boys received greater attention than girls in the classroom. The students' perception was that boys were seen to be more important and more liked. Boys dominated classroom discussion, and teachers asked them twice as many questions. Praise and encouragement were given to boys three times more often than to girls, and boys asked twice as many questions as

girls. Teachers were more concerned about boys, considered them to be more conscientious and capable, got on better with them, enjoyed teaching them more and were twice as likely to consider boys to be model students.

McKenzie and Gregg (1984:6) cited evidence that puberty affects girls negatively with regard to their self-image, whereas boys showed a positive self-image response. In addition, evidence of the link between low self-esteem and sex-role stereotyping by schools was highlighted. This stereotyping discourages girls from developing according to their own abilities and self-knowledge.

If boys are seen to be more important, authoritative, deserving and worthy of attention, this will lead to their developing more confidence and demanding more attention at the expense of girls.

#### **4.12 Recognising the need for a balanced approach**

Being open and warm while not overlooking the task orientation of a classroom was focused upon by Graham and Heimerer (1981:19). They found that:

more effective teachers create warm classroom climates by letting students know what help is available, showing affection towards students, and interacting with students in humane and genuine ways.

In particular they showed that classroom climate could be task-oriented and warm at the same time. Furthermore Graham and Heimerer sounded the following warning:

When student learning is a major goal, the worst possible situation may be a teacher who is extremely high in warmth and extremely low in cognitive emphases. (p.19)

In addition they observed that few teacher behaviours were applicable to all classroom environments. (p.16)

Hawthorne (1981:260-261) concluded that it was not possible to make a prescriptive list of skills and knowledge that teachers could always apply to any teaching situation. Rather teachers have to select appropriate behaviours from a wider spectrum based on their summing up of the situation at a given time.

Chavez (1984) worked with Cardenas to collect data from third and fifth grade students in California. This work found that achievement in language work was higher when the students' perceptions of satisfaction and competition were high. (p.246) A mixture of student satisfaction and competitiveness are components of a balanced approach to teaching style.

Good and Grouws (1977) investigated teaching effectiveness in fourth grade maths classes of over one hundred teachers. The students were mainly middle-class but there were also students of both low and high socio-economic status in the classes. They found that effective teaching occurred in the classrooms where there was:

- (1) student initiated behaviour;
- (2) whole class instruction (mainly);
- (3) general clarity of instruction and availability of information as needed (process feedback in particular);
- (4) a non-evaluative and relaxed learning environment which was task focused;
- (5) higher achievement expectations (more homework, fast pace); and
- (6) classrooms that were relatively free of major behaviour disorders. (p.53)

All six features of effective classrooms were identified as important by Good and Grouws. The noteworthy aspect as far as teacher-student relationships are concerned is the finding related to learning environment. A non-evaluative, relaxed yet task-oriented learning environment was seen as being effective. Bennett (1976), Coatney (1983), Collard (1984), Hawthorne (1981), Graham and Heimerer (1981), and Medley (1979) have provided evidence to support this conclusion.

Coatney (1983:28) suggested that to:

promote academic achievement, teachers should be academically oriented (making it known to students that academic goals are important, discussing academic content, etc.) and should provide a classroom atmosphere that is warm, caring and democratic.

It is not enough to do one or the other; both are an integral part of effective teaching. Collard (1984:153) cited Good, Biddle and Brophy's observation:

some teachers consistently outperform others in their influence upon student learning and attitudes, but...teacher behaviour which fosters growth in one area may not necessarily be related to or even impede attainment in others.

Collard concluded that different teacher behaviours were effective in different classroom situations. These situations vary depending on the grade level under consideration or the subject matter being taught.

Hawthorne (1981:260-261) stated that the effective teacher was:

- (1) the owner and judicious user of a broad range of skills;
- (2) generally warm;
- (3) supportive;

- (4) reasonably organised; and
- (5) able to obtain a high degree of task orientation.

#### **4.13 Aims of schooling: Implications for teachers' approaches to students**

The broadness and variety of the purposes of school must be considered when examining the question of what students should learn. In order for the school to be able to fulfil its aims variables which will influence the achievement of the selected aims must be identified.

Khan and Weiss (1973:778) stated:

School is more than a place where academic skills are taught and learned: it is a miniature community in itself where members interact and influence the behaviour of each other. The social relations among the students as a group and between the students and the teacher, significantly influence the quality of the classroom social climate which, in turn, influences cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

More recently Smith (1980:136-139) recognized the broad role of schools in our community. Development in students of the following six qualities was listed by Smith as general aims of education:

- (1) awareness;
- (2) adaptability;
- (3) cooperation;
- (4) concern;
- (5) problem-solving ability; and
- (6) positive self-concept.

A strong belief in the worth of every human being and the consequential implications this belief has on the education process was emphasized by Smith (1980:139) who stated:

If a society believes in the principle of the worth of every individual human being, it will try to promote an environment where every person can form and maintain a positive self concept. This entails encouragement of individual differences, and diversity of lifestyles. It will be recognised that no individual behaviour is to be frowned on unless it causes actual harm.

Two levels of student outcomes were outlined by Barker (1982:67). Firstly there are immediate outcomes such as those that can be measured, and that have occurred and been attained in the classroom. These are short term academic or affective outcomes. Secondly there are long term outcomes which are not apparent until after the student has left school. Adult personality, professional or occupational skill were mentioned by Barker in this long term category.

There is some disagreement as to the purpose of schools and education. Fordham (1983:53) found that teachers saw the broad educational aims of primary and secondary schools as being:

- (1) to help equip students with skills and attitudes which will enable them to take their places effectively and competently in society, fitting them to make choices of occupational roles and to live harmoniously in the community; more so than
- (2) to foster the development of the children's individuality and independence, enabling them to discover their own talents and interests, find a full enjoyment of life in their own way, and arrive at their own attitudes towards society.

A school's educational philosophy stems from the priority it gives to either of the broad aims identified by Fordham. A greater concern with affective education and the fostering of positive attitudes in the long term is the alignment of the



school's philosophy with the second of the two aims. In Tasmania, the Committee on Primary Education (1980) officially recognised that primary education is in line with the second aim although it is evident that much of the Tasmanian community places more importance on the first aim.

The classroom is where most teaching and learning occurs. Interactions and experiences that occur in the classroom play an important role in determining childrens' perceptions of school and their attitudes towards school personnel and school activities. Regardless of departmental or school policies it is the teacher who works in the classroom with the students and who therefore has the major role in the school's input directly affecting the student's perceptions and attitudes towards the school.

#### **4.14 Use of communication**

Teachers have to relate to students. Communication of some sort must occur when people are together. Teachers, by virtue of their role, have the power to designate the communication patterns in the classroom and the range of the relationships which can result. A teacher's behaviour towards students signals the ways that the teacher considers are appropriate for the students to use in response.

The establishing of relationships takes place through a series of communications. These communications can be of two types: verbal and non-verbal.

Barker (1982:100) examined messages of both these types and found that in order to facilitate positive affective outcomes it was necessary to institute the type of communication environment which would lay the foundation for teachers and students to express positive feelings about each other, subject matter and discipline.

The role of the more subtle mode of non-verbal communication is vital. Non-verbal communication can be much more powerful than verbal communication. Barker (1982:101) indicated that through non-verbal behaviour a teacher can:

- (1) signal availability for communication;
- (2) increase sensory stimulation in students; and
- (3) communicate interpersonal closeness and warmth.

The importance of communication in the educational process was emphasized by Bourke, Davis, Clark and Holzer (1980). Their work provided a link between students' positive feelings for school-related people and activities and student performance and learning outcomes. Bourke et al referred to Britton's finding that:

One of the major functions of speech is that by its means we declare ourselves as individuals and not until we have done that can we establish relationships between the members of a group...these relationships are established partly by non-verbal signals, but are largely dominated by and focused upon verbal signals; and we must acknowledge the power of our speech to create, and particularly to destroy, relationships of trust and good will. (p.7)

Bourke et al also noted that Barbara, when considering human relationships pointed out:

The better listeners we become, the more we will live in the present...and the more relaxed, spontaneous, alive, and productive we become, the more effectively we will be able to listen and the better able will we be to tap further our hidden resources of creative energies. We can then give of ourselves more freely in conversation, retreat less often behind empty word systems, and so develop a sense of mutual understanding and rapport. In order that this may become a reality, we must practise the art of listening. (p.7)

The importance and role of oral language in classroom interaction was referred to by Corson (1984:464). Children with underdeveloped oral communication skills are, according to Corson, handicapped in every human relationship situation. Such children suffer the inability to develop their full personal potential because of their reduced quality of interactions with others. Coupled with this they are handicapped by their poor communication skills. Both the affective and cognitive learning domain suffer. Corson maintained that proficiency in oral language skills is vital in the development of the student's ability to capitalize on the learning opportunities provided by the teacher.

Collard (1984:154) highlighted the importance of the nature of transactions between teachers and students. He concluded that these transactions might well be more important than school input variables.

Examining the interaction between the teacher and student more closely Jackson (1978:11) explained:

each teacher-pupil interaction generates its own communication system: a set of unconscious and conscious signals which triggers the behaviour of the other.

Teachers' communication skills and the skills that they engender in their students have a significant effect in the affective and cognitive learning of the students.

## **CHAPTER 5: ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING SKILLS**

### **5.1 The need for teacher assessment**

Teacher assessment is not only an essential, but unavoidable component of school systems.

Millman (1981:12) observed:

To evaluate or not to evaluate, that is not the question. We make judgments all the time, judgments about ourselves and what we do and about others and what they do. And we, in turn are judged by others. We cannot escape evaluation. Every choice, every decision - to speak or not, to use this example or that - involves an evaluation, automatic or deliberate.

Even though teachers may not be aware at the time, every thought or action they perform is based on a judgement, either a conscious one or one that is instinctive, of what they consider is the best thing to do or say in a particular situation. This judgement may be decided upon after a very brief time or a long period.

Doyle (1983:7) made the vital distinction between what is to be taught and how it is to be taught. This distinction separates the assessment of teaching behaviour from the issue of determining what knowledge, skills or attitudes should be taught. Professional decisions regarding what should be taught and how it should be taught rightfully remain with teachers.

Although teaching is not fully understood, and assessment techniques are not perfect, decisions regarding instruction and personnel have to be made. Adams (1975:155-156), Doyle (1983:8) and McNamara (1983:32-34) supported this point of view. Even though uncertainty exists as to exactly what can be assessed and how this can be done, some assessment is more likely to be better than none at all. In addition, the contingency

or fallibility of evaluation must be acknowledged. We are aware of the fact that no teaching skill can be assessed in total isolation from the classroom situation. In addition, no single particular approach to teaching can be generalized across all teaching situations (Hathaway, 1980:214). As yet it is not possible to answer confidently the extent of the influence a teacher has on student performance or behaviour. (Ornstein, 1984:109) There are innumerable variables, and the interactions and relationships that occur in classrooms are extremely complex.

Therefore, although being quite aware of the incompleteness of knowledge about teaching and assessment, it is not only possible but desirable that assessment takes place provided that educators qualify the assessment process according to what is established as fact and the conditions under which the facts are valid.

Doyle (1983:13) listed four essential reasons for assessing teaching:

- (1) to diagnose and advance teaching and to better the person as a teacher and the teacher as a person;
- (2) to assist in administrative decisions regarding personnel;
- (3) to help in guiding students into courses and curricula suited to their needs and abilities and the modification of the courses and curricula to better meet the students' needs and abilities; and
- (4) to provide criteria for research on teaching itself.

Many writers have identified particularly the first two of these reasons as being important. Roths and Preskill (1982:310), Hawthorne (1981:262), Ellis (1978:33), Gorton (1983:241) and Millman (1981:13) referred to the improvement of learning conditions for students and the facilitation of

administrative decisions as being the two main reasons for assessing teachers and teaching.

Stanton (1981:29) expanded on the "improvement of teaching" aspect. He maintained:

We cannot assume that improvement in teaching comes automatically with increased experience. Rather, we need to actively seek information about our teaching performance to provide a base for professional growth. By so doing, we give ourselves the opportunity of identifying and eliminating ineffective or damaging procedures. We also give ourselves the opportunity of identifying and strengthening effective, facilitative procedures.

This final point made by Stanton is extremely important. The positive aspects of assessment can be very easily overlooked; this no doubt is one reason why assessment is regarded unfavourably by some teachers.

Bolton (1973:21) agreed with the two main reasons for assessment listed previously. Bolton saw assessment as a means to assist with the following:

- (1) enabling improvement in instructional techniques;
- (2) rewarding superior performance;
- (3) producing information on which to base decisions regarding the modification of teaching assignments;
- (4) protecting both the individual and the school system;
- (5) ratifying the teacher-selection process;
- (6) facilitating the planning of the teacher's career; and
- (7) self-assessment.

## **5.2 The current status of teaching assessment in Australia**

In the Australian situation it appears that the majority of teacher assessment is carried out for the sole purpose of

administrative decision-making .

Ball, Cunningham and Radford (1961:153) in their review of teacher assessment in Australia saw assessment or grading as the expedient option in any system where there are fewer positions to fill than aspirants to the vacancies. Twenty-five years later this still seems to be the main thinking behind teacher assessment in both Tasmania and Australia as a whole.

It would appear that at present, teacher assessment occurring in Tasmanian schools is almost exclusively of the traditional type. This type of assessment is employed to determine:

- (1) the award or non-award of the Tasmanian Teachers Certificate;
- (2) suitability for promotion; and
- (3) suitability for employment at any stage of a teacher's career.

Chislett (1979:18) perceived this problem of the narrow use of teacher assessment in the Australian system. He raised the question of whether primary school personnel are prepared to volunteer themselves for formal assessment of their teaching even for the purpose of improving their skills and techniques.

Smyth (1983:27-8) pointed out that teachers continue to regard assessment as traditional inspection practices which question their classroom behaviour and professional competence. Teachers are not interested in assessment other than for promotion. The holding of these attitudes by teachers has a significant bearing upon the possibilities for assessing teacher-student relationships.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1979:269), Millman (1981:13) and Harris, McIntyre, Littleton and Long (1979:289-290) referred to the formative and summative roles of program or

curriculum evaluation. The ongoing improvement of the teaching program requires formative or continuous evaluation. On the other hand, summative evaluation is a cumulative summing up of the effectiveness of a curriculum.

Teacher assessment can be viewed in a similar way. Firstly, assessment can be informal; the ongoing development of a teacher's skill. On the other hand it can be formal; the traditional summing up of teaching skill at a specific time. The latter type may not necessarily involve the provision of information to assist with a teacher's professional growth.

When considering the development of teaching skills it is necessary to determine the appropriate type of assessment. Skill improvement requires a continuing type of assessment without the overriding presence, or threat as it is seen by some teachers, of the award of an assessment rating.

### **5.3 Criteria for measurement, evaluation and assessment—the assessment of teacher–student relationships**

Criteria for educational measurement, evaluation and assessment can be divided into sets. Chislett (1979:19) made reference to Mitzel's three sets of criteria:

- (1) presage criteria (the characteristics and properties of the teacher);
- (2) process criteria (teacher behaviour and that of the students); and
- (3) product criteria (student learning growth, or lack of growth).

Becher and Maclure (1978:225) found that "process" (the actual experiences and teaching offered to the student) and "product" (outcomes) are useful modes to distinguish. "Product"



and "process" are not unrelated but their qualities are quite different. As a result, methods adopted for assessing either mode cannot be similar. An example of this is that whereas statistical measurement can be applied to evaluating outcomes, aspects of the teaching process such as the quality of teacher-student relationships, student satisfaction or student attitudes cannot be subjected to such methodology.

Dunkin and Biddle (1974:38) in their model for the study of classroom teaching identified a fourth area which they labelled "context variables". Context variables encompass student characteristics and properties, and school, community and classroom contexts. It was not suggested that the teacher should be responsible for context variables. However, it is important to acknowledge that while they are variables out of the teacher's control they will have an effect on classroom learning outcomes.

Borich and Madden (1977:4) identified four stages of classroom instruction that can be measured:

- (1) attitudes and knowledge related to teaching (pre-operational measures);
- (2) observations of classroom behaviour (immediate process measures);
- (3) ratings of teachers' professional attitude and knowledge (intermediate process measures); and
- (4) student attitudes and achievement (product measures).

Centra and Potter (1980:274) formulated a structural model of school and teacher variables influencing student learning outcomes. This model took into account:

- (1) conditions found in the local community;
- (2) conditions found in the school;
- (3) characteristics of the teacher;

- (4) characteristics of the students;
- (5) teaching performance;
- (6) student performance;
- (7) student behaviour; and
- (8) student learning outcomes.

Any one of these writer's concepts of broad evaluation criteria runs parallel with the others. Table 3 on the following page illustrates the concurrence of broad measurement, evaluation and assessment criteria:

<i>Author</i>	<i>Criteria</i>		
Chislet	Presage	Process	Product
Becher and Maclure		Process	Product
Dunkin and Biddle	Presage Context *	Process	Product
Borich and Madden	Preoperational	Immediate Process and Intermediate Process	Product
Centra and Potter	Teacher characteristics School or school district conditions * Within school conditions * Student characteristics *	Teaching performance	Student behaviour Student learning outcomes

Table 3: Broad criteria for teacher assessment  
(\* no teacher control over these criteria)

Barker's adaptation of Dunkin and Biddle's model of classroom learning (figure 1) sets out what constitutes each of the presage, process and product criteria, and illustrates the place of teacher-student relationships:

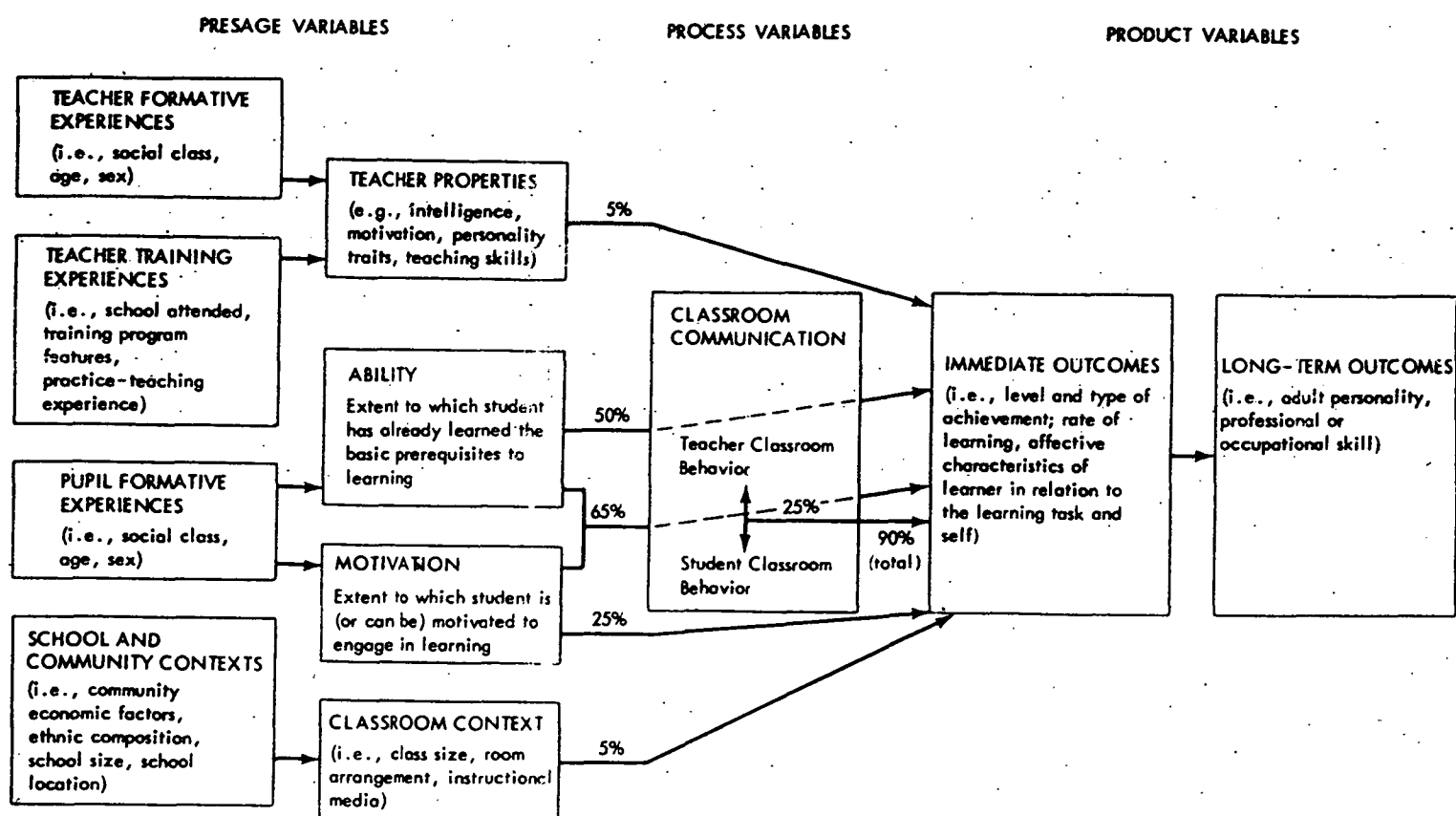


Figure 1: Barker's model of Classroom Learning (Adapted from Dunkin and Biddle, 1974, p. 38. (Barker, 1982:67)

There is provision within the broad framework of teacher assessment for the assessment of teaching behaviour, specifically teaching-student relationship skills.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Trends in the research**

Schools and teachers are concerned with a wider concept of student learning than the purely academic type. In addition, not all learning can be measured precisely nor do the skills which develop in association with that learning necessarily become apparent within the short term.

Unless students wish to learn something it is unlikely that they will do so. Coerciveness may indeed produce results but its ability to maintain the innate desire to learn, over a life time, is dubious.

The behaviour of teachers towards students must take into account that students are individuals with human needs and wants, as well as being members of a class. Although it may not be possible nor desirable to meet all these needs and wants in the school situation, teachers must be cognisant of the fact that students should be accorded their rights as individuals. At the same time the group's collective rights must also be taken into account.

Although no one teacher behaviour can be singled out as being more necessary to perform than all others in order for effective teaching to occur, teacher-student relationship skills is one area that numerous researchers have referred to as being an essential component of effective teaching behaviour.

No single approach to teaching can be adopted universally. It is not possible to claim that healthy teacher-student relationships alone will ensure positive students learning outcomes. However, teacher-student relationships play an important role in children's learning, as do clear, orderly and structured experiences and emphasis on task completion and achievement.

Teachers must be aware that their verbal and nonverbal communications with students may be interpreted differently from the intended way. It is for this reason that teachers should employ methods of keeping a check on how their classroom behaviour is being perceived by students, such as surveys of classroom environment.

It is possible to establish regularly identified factors contributing to effective learning environments. The behaviours which students display in effective learning environments are listed below followed by those teacher-behaviours which facilitate implementation and maintenance of such an environment.

**Factors contributing to effective learning environments:**

**Students:**

- (1) see the need to respect the rights of other people;
- (2) take responsibility for themselves;
- (3) take responsibility for their belongings;
- (4) cooperate;
- (5) succeed in social relationships with their peers;
- (6) possess a high self concept;
- (7) feel that they belong;
- (8) receive psychological support from the teacher;
- (9) feel positively towards school;
- (10) are involved in experiences requiring the use of divergent thinking;
- (11) have their ideas and opinions considered and used by the teacher;
- (12) like the teacher;
- (13) are understood by the teacher;
- (14) have their human qualities recognized; and
- (15) receive ongoing feedback.

**The teacher:**

- (1) develops students' proficiency in oral language in order to assist with overall development of individual personality and the ability to relate effectively with others;**
- (2) is flexible;**
- (3) uses direct or indirect teaching methods as the situation dictates;**
- (4) is personally well adjusted;**
- (5) is able to understand students;**
- (6) is able to select and perform appropriate behaviour from a wide repertoire;**
- (7) provides a non-evaluative, relaxed yet task oriented environment;**
- (8) relates to children in a wider sense than their roles as students;**
- (9) encourages appropriate levels of independence;**
- (10) actively listens to students;**
- (11) shares time and attention equally among students;**
- (12) maintains an ordered classroom with relatively little effort; and**
- (13) provides a student-centred environment.**

**A key finding is that classroom climate can be simultaneously task-oriented and warm. Much of the research referred to lends strong support to this position.**

**Factors which have been identified as those which need to be taken into account when determining the type of classroom environment which should be promoted are:**

- (1) subject matter;**
- (2) grade level; and**
- (3) student characteristics.**

Grade level and student characteristics are the two factors which are of greater importance to primary school teachers who tend to minimise distinctions between subject areas. Warmth and acceptance, are more important dimensions of teaching style contributing to teacher-effectiveness in the primary school than they are in secondary school. Likewise the conclusion that a more student-oriented and activity-oriented environment is linked more with younger students than older ones.

Another finding that has been discussed by several researchers concerns the difference in classroom climate between that which is seen as best for students of high S.E.S. compared with that for students of low S.E.S.. Where classes comprise students of widely differing socio-economic backgrounds teachers face difficulty in providing the optimum learning environment. Teachers can optimize the academic achievement of one group only at the possible risk of another group's level of achievement.

A small amount of research, which is contradictory to the majority of findings located, suggests strongly that an effective teacher is one who gains the attention of students no matter by what means this is achieved. Teacher behaviours which create pressure, encourage a high level of competition and coerce students would be supported by some researchers, if children were otherwise not achieving. In fact with low S.E.S. students, it has been maintained that the teacher has no choice. It has been maintained that negative feelings towards the teacher are beneficial to the learning process. In this case, learning product is being given priority over learning process.

The trends which have been identified can assist in the identification of future exploration in the area of teacher-student relationship skills.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

### **1. Information Dissemination:**

There is considerable research which has focused on teacher-student relationships.

1.1 A procedure to facilitate the dissemination of information to teachers regarding the components of teacher-student relationship skills and the part they play in classroom dynamics needs to be established.

Teachers need to become aware that they have the power to determine and implement assessment procedures to suit their individual requirements. Furthermore the fact that assessment does not have to result in the assignment of a grade or an award has to be acknowledged by teachers and administrators.

1.2 The dissemination of material to inform teachers about the full range of assessment procedures is essential.

### **2. Assessment:**

Coupled with this is the need for a review of teacher-assessment which considers more than formal, traditional assessment. This type of assessment is the most common form of assessment being carried out at present in Tasmania.

2.1 Ongoing assessment is the type that must receive more attention from educators in Tasmania for the purpose of facilitating on-going teaching skill improvement.



### **3. Class groupings and teaching practices:**

Class sizes and groupings need to be those which best facilitate the learning process. Classes that are too large present teachers with less opportunity of relating with students individually.

It is recognized that schools have a finite amount of human, physical and financial resources which limit the possibilities. Groupings also have to be considered in the light of research findings related to socio-economic status and age of the students. Teachers must aim to be non-sexist in their dealings with students.

3.1. The government should be sympathetic towards the needs of schools and provide positive assistance to schools in the development of more effective class groupings and learning environments.

Procedures for analysing classroom environment in order to determine student and teacher perceptions and preferences have been developed and are being refined continually. Useful results are being collected and analysed from data from learning environment surveys. Teaching style will be more effective when used by a teacher who has been matched with a class of students as a result of completion of questionnaires such as the M.C.I. referred to in Chapter 4. While it may prove impossible to match teachers and students in every case, it is possible that skilful and flexible teachers could derive information from student and teacher surveys which would assist them to determine and implement optimum learning environments.

3.2 Use of classroom environment surveys to experiment further with the matching of teachers, students and learning environments should continue.

#### **4 Administrative and professional support:**

Administrative support is essential to enable teachers to implement and maintain a caring atmosphere in the classroom.

4.1 Administrators and senior staff must relate to children and staff in a way that provides strong support and encouragement to classroom teachers in their efforts to provide a caring and effective learning environment.

The quality of interactions is vital to the teaching-learning process. There should be further investigation into ways of giving student-teachers and beginning teachers assistance to enable them to progress as quickly as possible towards an outlook and approach to their work which allows them to take more account of the needs of students as individuals.

4.2 The designers of teacher training courses must keep in mind that their students will be expected to be capable of providing learning environments conducive to the development of positive teacher-student relationships and effective learning outcomes.

4.3 Those responsible for conducting courses in teacher education should analyse their programs and teaching approaches to determine how they are encouraging such behaviour in teachers of the future.

4.4 The induction of new teachers into their school roles must be investigated further with a view to assisting them to more quickly develop their confidence in the classroom environment.

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